

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 05013

USSALTTWO

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM, SALT, UR, US
SUBJECT: PRAVDA QUESTIONS U.S. SINCERITY IN SALT

SUMMARY: UNSIGNED MARCH 17 PRAVDA COMMENTARY ON SALT REPRESENTS IN OUR VIEW A SERIOUS ESCALATION OF SOVIET RHETORIC ON SUBJECT. COMMENTARY QUESTIONS U.S. SINCERITY IN NEGOTIATIONS, IMPLIES U.S. "HYPOCRISY" IN CONDUCTING SALT TALKS, AND CALLS ON THE U.S. TO TAKE A "MORE SERIOUS" VIEW OF THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED AND TO REALIZE "HOW MUCH IS AT STAKE." END SUMMARY.

1. UNSIGNED PRAVDA COMMENTARY ENTITLED "RETORT" (REPLIKA) (ASSUME DEPARTMENT HAS FULL FBIS TEXT) OPENS WITH WHAT
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HAS BECOME A RITUALISTIC ATTACK ON LINKAGE OF SALT WITH THE HORN OF AFRICA, CONDEMNING THE "BANKRUPTCY" OF THIS VIEW AND CLAIMING THAT "CONTRADICTORY STATEMENTS" ARE COMING OUT OF THE WHITE HOUSE IN THIS ISSUE. PRAVDA THEN MOVES ONTO A BROADER DISCUSSION OF U.S. MOTIVES IN THE SALT PROCESS AND STATES THAT ADMINISTRATION FIGURES ARE

NOW DEMANDING SOVIET CONCESSIONS, WHICH PRAVDA SAYS ONLY SERVES THE INTERESTS OF THE OPPONENTS OF SALT. THIS IS FOLLOWED BY THE SUGGESTION THAT THE U.S. IS NOT SERIOUSLY SEEKING AN AGREEMENT AND A STATEMENT THAT THERE IS NO PLACE FOR "HYPOCRISY." WARNING THAT SOVIET PATIENCE "IS NOT LIMITLESS," PRAVDA CONCLUDES THAT IT IS TIME FOR THE U.S. TO PONDER "MORE SERIOUSLY" THE QUESTIONS INVOLVED AND TO RECOGNIZE "HOW MUCH IS AT STAKE."

2. IN A CONVERSATION WITH POL COUNSELOR ON MARCH 16, NEWLY APPOINTED HEAD OF INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES PRIMAKOV (RECENTLY RETURNED FROM THE U.S.) STRONGLY ATTACKED SALT-HORN LINKAGE. HE WARNED, MOREOVER, THAT, BECAUSE OF THE WAY LINKAGE WAS BEING ESTABLISHED IN THE U.S., SOVIET-U.S. RELATIONS ARE ON THE VERGE OF A "CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE."

3. COMMENT: THE VEILED WARNING THAT THE U.S. SHOULD REALIZE HOW MUCH IS AT STAKE NOW IS PRECISELY THE SAME THAT BREZHNEV ISSUED IN HIS REMARKS AT THE SUPREME SOVIET MEETING ON FEBRUARY 24. THIS COMMENTARY, HOWEVER, SPEAKS WITH MORE URGENCY AND WITH MORE VITRIOL TOWARD THE U.S. THAN HAVE PREVIOUS SOVIET STATEMENTS. HERETOFORE, U.S. POLICY HAS NOT BEEN QUESTIONED NEARLY AS OPENLY IN THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN ON SALT WHICH WAS OPENED BY THE PRAVDA EDITORIAL ARTICLE OF FEBRUARY 11. NOR HAVE THE SOVIETS WARNED US SO DIRECTLY OF AN INCIPIENT

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"CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE," AS DID PRIMAKOV.

4. THE REASONS FOR THE SOVIET DECISION TO ESCALATE THE RHETORIC AT THIS TIME ARE NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR, BUT THE LINKAGE DEBATE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE THE CENTRAL ELEMENT IN SOVIET THINKING. IT IS TRUE THAT CONSIDERABLE SOVIET ATTENTION IN RECENT WEEKS HAS BEEN DEVOTED TO REFUTING THE LEGITIMACY OF LINKAGE AND PRIMAKOV CERTAINLY WANTED TO MAKE A CLOSE CONNECTION BETWEEN LINKAGE AND DETERIORATING U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS.

5. THE WORDING AND ORGANIZATION OF THIS COMMENTARY SUGGEST THAT MOSCOW SEES DEEPER ISSUES THAN LINKAGE AFFECTING RELATIONS. THUS, THE LAST HALF OF THE PIECE MOVES BEYOND THE QUESTION OF LINKAGE TO THE HEART OF THE SALT PROBLEM AND QUESTIONS BASIC U.S. MOTIVES IN NEGOTIATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ISSUES THEMSELVES. IN THIS COMMENTARY MOSCOW HAS TAKEN A BIG STEP TOWARD OPEN ATTACKS ON ADMINISTRATION SINCERITY AND GOOD FAITH IN SALT. SUCH AN ESCALATION CAN ONLY HAVE HAD APPROVAL AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS, AS IS SHOWN BY THE USE OF THE

UNSIGNED "RETORT" FORMAT WHICH IS MORE AUTHORITATIVE THAN
A SIGNED COMMENTARY BUT LOWER ON THE SCALE THAN A TASS OR
GOVERNMENT "STATEMENT" (ZAYAVLENIYE). TOON

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